

CURSE OF STRAHD

BEHIND TSEER FALLS



A Horror Adventure for Curse of Strahd

BEHIND TSER FALLS

CREDITS

Writing: Dan Kahn & Adam Miller

Editor: Christopher Maher

Cover Art: Nicole Mastrodomenico @nikodomeniko on Instagram.

Cartography: onedaygm

Oni, Skull, and Boneless Token Art: Dr. Mapzo

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, Ravenloft, Eberron, the dragon ampersand, Ravnica and all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries.

This work contains material that is copyright Wizards of the Coast and/or other authors. Such material is used with permission under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild.

All other original material in this work is copyright 2021 by Daniel Kahn and published under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild.

INTRODUCTION

Within the forest, northwest of the dreary town of Vallaki, hunters tell of a deranged wizard who has made his home in the misty mountain ranges of Mount Baratok. Once an accomplished mage, now a disgraced hermit, the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok is the stuff of local Barovian legend. However, unhinged as he may be, his vast power is unquestionable, and he may prove to be a valuable ally to those who manage to appease him. Can the heroes enlist the help of this maniacal spellslinger to defeat the Devil of Barovia? Or will they, too, simply become another Barovian folktale?

WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT?

Curse of Strahd introduces the idea that there is a Mad Mage living on Mount Baratok on pages 39-40. Unfortunately, there is little adventure to be had in seeking out the Mad Mage. This supplement to Curse of Strahd provides a short adventure where the party can help the Mad Mage and acquire a powerful magic item for spellcasters to wield against Strahd and his vampire minions in the late stages of the campaign. Additionally, this document provides suggestions for adjusting the encounter with the Mad Mage from the book so that the party does not simply kill him and end the adventure before it starts.

As always, it is up to you how much of the content you want to use. It's perfectly fine to use some parts of this supplement while discarding others, or simply let the ideas presented here inspire new ideas of your own. This adventure is intended for parties of 4 to 6 characters with an average level of 7 to 9 and is intended to be a later-campaign location akin to the Werewolf Den, Berez, and Argynvostholt. This adventure can also be used as a horror or Ravenloft-themed one shot separate from Curse of Strahd.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The party seeks out the help of the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok for help in their quest to defeat Strahd and escape from Barovia. At Mount Baratok, the party has an encounter with the Mad Mage. Once hostilities are diffused, the Mad Mage gives the party a quest to recover his spellbook and *staff of power*, which he lost near Tser Falls when he was defeated by Strahd. Near Tser Falls the party encounters Lughanis, a disguised oni claiming to be looking for his lost boy. The party must navigate down the treacherous cliff to a cave behind the falls. Once inside, the party encounters a few undead monsters who serve as guards, while Lughanis assesses their strengths. From there, the party can continue to explore the cave until Lughanis finds a good opportunity to strike them.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The following adventure hooks can be used to get the party started on this quest.

THE HAND YOU WERE DEALT - CHAPTER 1

In Chapter 1, the book describes how Madam Eva gives the characters a card reading that describes to them the locations of several objects of power which can aid them in defeating Strahd. She also tells them of an ally that can aid them; feel free to have her name the Mad Mage as this ally (in the book, this is the equivalent of drawing the Broken One tarot card, or the King of Diamonds if you're using a deck of playing cards, see pg. 15 for details). When

describing Strahd's Enemy as Madam Eva, you may read the following passage from the book if you intend for him to be an ally:

"Your greatest ally will be a wizard. His mind will be broken, but his spells are strong."

You can read the following if you intend for the party to simply acquire the Mad Mage's staff and not use him as an NPC ally:

"Your greatest benefactor will be a wizard. His mind will be broken, but his staff is strong."

MEETING OF THE MINDS - CHAPTER 5

In Chapter 5 of the module, Victor Vallakovich is confined to the attic within the burgomaster's mansion in Vallaki, where he is attempting to construct a teleportation circle in order to leave Barovia and leave his parents to their doom. If the characters discover him in the attic with his retinue of skeletal cats, he will bargain with them to help him find the Mad Mage, as he believes that the powerful wizard, or at the very least his spellbook, can help him complete the circle. He knows that even though the Mad Mage was defeated by Strahd, hunters in the woods northwest of Lake Zarovich have reported maniacal cackling that can be heard from the top of Mount Baratok.

A WEDDING REGISTRY - CHAPTER 8

In Chapter 8 of the adventure, the Abbot that resides within the Abbey of Saint Markovia in the village of Krezk is working tirelessly to create a bride for Strahd by constructing flesh golems from the remains of Krezk townsfolk. As written, the Abbot asks the characters to retrieve a wedding dress from Vallaki for his latest creation, which he has named Vasilka. Instead of this, have him ask the characters to find the Mad Mage, as he believes that the arcane knowledge contained within his spellbook will surely contain the enchantments he needs to create the perfect bride. Like Victor in Vallaki, he also knows of the cackling that can be heard from the top of Mount Baratok, and directs the characters there to begin their search.

MAD LIBS - CHAPTER 13

In Chapter 13, the characters will most likely encounter the lich Exethanter in Area X27 of the Amber Temple. Exethanter suffers from a crippling memory loss. If the characters manage to restore his memory with either a *greater restoration* or *wish* spell, and tell him of their quest to defeat Strahd, Exethanter will recount the tale of the Mad Mage's fight with Strahd and suggest that they seek him out, as he may possess valuable information about how to vanquish the vampire lord. Exethanter may attempt a *scrying* spell to locate the Mad Mage, which fails due to the Mad Mage's *mind blank* spell (Exethanter can share that he assumes this is the case). After the *scrying* spell fails, he suggests the party start their search in Vallaki.

If the players cannot restore his memory, he asks that they seek out the Mad Mage anyway, as even in his diminished state he believes that the powerful wizard will possess a way to reverse his memory loss. In return for finding the mage, Exethanter will offer his full breadth of knowledge about the temple, as well as any treasure contained within. He suggests they start their search in the town of Vallaki. Once the players reach Vallaki, feel free to have a local NPC recount the legend of the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok, which should lead them in the right direction.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure takes place in two locations. First the party meets the Mad Mage at the base of Mount Baratok, and then heads to a cavern behind Tser Falls to retrieve his staff and spellbook for him.

MOUNT BARATOK

Once the characters choose to seek out the Mad Mage of Mount Baratok, the adventure can begin. You can use material from pages 39-40 from *Curse of Strahd* to run the first encounter with the Mad Mage. However, there are a few adjustments you can make to ensure that this adventure begins smoothly and doesn't hit a dead end before it begins.

- After reading the boxed text on page 39, you can have the Mad Mage immediately say, "Tell your dark masters they can break my body, but never my spirit!" rather than waiting for him to be reduced to 50 hit points. This should prompt the party to try to negotiate with him rather than fight from the onset and avoid a scenario where the Mad Mage is killed in a misunderstanding.
- Allow characters who make a successful DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check to diffuse the violence, although the Mad Mage remains on guard. A character that mentions that their goal is to defeat Strahd automatically succeeds on the check.

Rather than having the Mad Mage remember nothing that happened to him before the onset of his madness, have him remember nothing before he arrived in Barovia. This allows him to explain how he was defeated by Strahd and lost both his staff and spellbook regardless of whether or not the party has access to greater restoration magic.

When the party engages the Mad Mage in conversation he reveals his plight. When this happens, you can summarize or read the following:

I... I attempted to defeat the devil. Yes, yes...that's why I came here. We fought in the castle... I underestimated him. In one final act to humiliate me, he threw me over Tser Falls, defeated. I awoke some time later at a Vistani camp downstream...my staff...my spellbook...gone! From there I retreated to the mountains where my enemies couldn't find me. They haven't discovered me yet, but it's simply a matter of time... no no no, I must escape this hell!Spellbook! My spellbook. If you find it for me, perhaps I could use the incantations within to devise a way to escape! Not to mention the staff...very powerful, yes... What say you?!

Although his madness makes it challenging for him to communicate, the Mad Mage reiterates the following key points to get the party started on their quest.

- He lost his staff and spellbook somewhere near Tser Falls. He is confident Strahd does not have the staff or he would certainly wield it himself.
- If the party can return his spellbook he may be able to help them all escape Barovia.
- He will lend the party his staff of power if they plan to exact his vengeance upon Strahd.

TSER FALLS

An oni by the name of Lughanis has made his home in a hidden cavern behind Tser Falls. It was Lughanis who found the Mad Mage's staff of power and spellbook after Strahd threw the Mad Mage over Tser Falls. Lughanis adores his newly found magic staff and wields it to great effect as he abducts travelers along the road (see Lughanis's stat block at the end of this supplement).

APPROACHING THE FALLS

When the party arrives at the bridge just east of Tser Falls (Area H on the Map of Barovia), you can read the following:

An arching bridge of mold-encrusted stone spans the large river. To the west mist bellows from a thousand-foot waterfall. A capable-looking human male dressed in Barovian garb carrying a walking stick and a crossbow steps into view on the far side of the bridge and waves slowly in your direction.

The figure is actually **Lughanis** using his change shape feature to appear as a capable-looking Barovian hunter named Grygori. He carries the Mad Mage's *staff of power*, which is disguised as an ordinary walking stick while in his polymorphed state. Lughanis views the party as food, although is all the more interested in them if they openly carry any magical items. He hopes to gain a measure of the party's strength and then kill them when he's got them in a compromised position within his lair, where they'll have a difficult time fleeing.

In order to bait the characters, Lughanis, as Grygori, tells the characters that he is looking for his son who was taken by some monster. When the party engages in conversation with Lughanis you can read or summarize the following:

"Please, I mean you no harm. My name is Grygori. I hail from the Village of Barovia. Have you seen a boy, just shy of thirteen? It's my son, Anton... he left the village yesterday evening to pick some mushrooms from the River Ivlis and never came back. I tracked him west out of the village to no avail. Some Vistani I encountered on the road hadn't seen the boy, but told me a tale of a vile horned beast that lives in a cavern behind the falls who abducts unwary passing travelers. Please, I am at my wit's end! Have you seen anything?"

A successful DC 18 Wisdom (Insight) check reveals that something feels off about Lughanis's story. A success by more than 5 reveals that he is outright lying. If they do not discover his ruse, the party should determine that their goals and Lughanis's goals align. If the party reveals their quest, Lughanis may even suggest that the beast he seeks may have taken the items they want. He offers to team up with them, suggesting that his "tracking skills" from hunting may be useful to them and shares his 100-foot-long rope and pitons with them. If the party refuses Lughanis's help or insists that it is safer for him to wait for them to return, Lughanis waits for them to descend and then stalks them using an *invisibility* spell and hovering above the ground so that he remains completely undetected.

SCALING THE FALLS

After learning that there may be a cavern behind the waterfall, the party will have to find a safe way to access it. The cave is situated 100 feet from the top of the falls and is barely visible behind the falls by someone specifically looking for it. Lughanis can normally get in and out of his lair by flying. Because the cave is so high up, Lughanis suggests propelling down from the top of the falls rather than climbing from the bottom. When the characters examine the falls from above, you can read the following:

The roaring torrent of water from the River Ivlis tumbles nearly a thousand feet to the bottom of this collection of precarious rocky outcroppings. The rocks along the cliffside are slick with moisture. Behind the curtain of water, roughly 100 feet below where you stand, an alcove in the cliffside is made visible by faint flickering.

Without magical means, the party will have to make the following skill checks to navigate to the cave entrance. You can modify these skill checks if the characters use a different method than tying off a rope and descending one at a time.

- **Planning the Descent.** One character must make a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check to find a safe place to tie a rope and descend down the cliff beside the falls.
- **Tying the Rope.** One character must make a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Sleight of Hand) check to tie the rope securely. A character with the Sailor background (or other relevant background) can make this check with advantage. (See “Variant: Skills with Different Abilities” section in Chapter 7 of the Player’s Handbook.) On a failure, the rope has a 10% chance of coming loose while each

character descends. If the check fails by 5 or more, this chance increases to 20%. A character can check the knot’s integrity with a DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation) check, finding no issues with the knot on a failure.

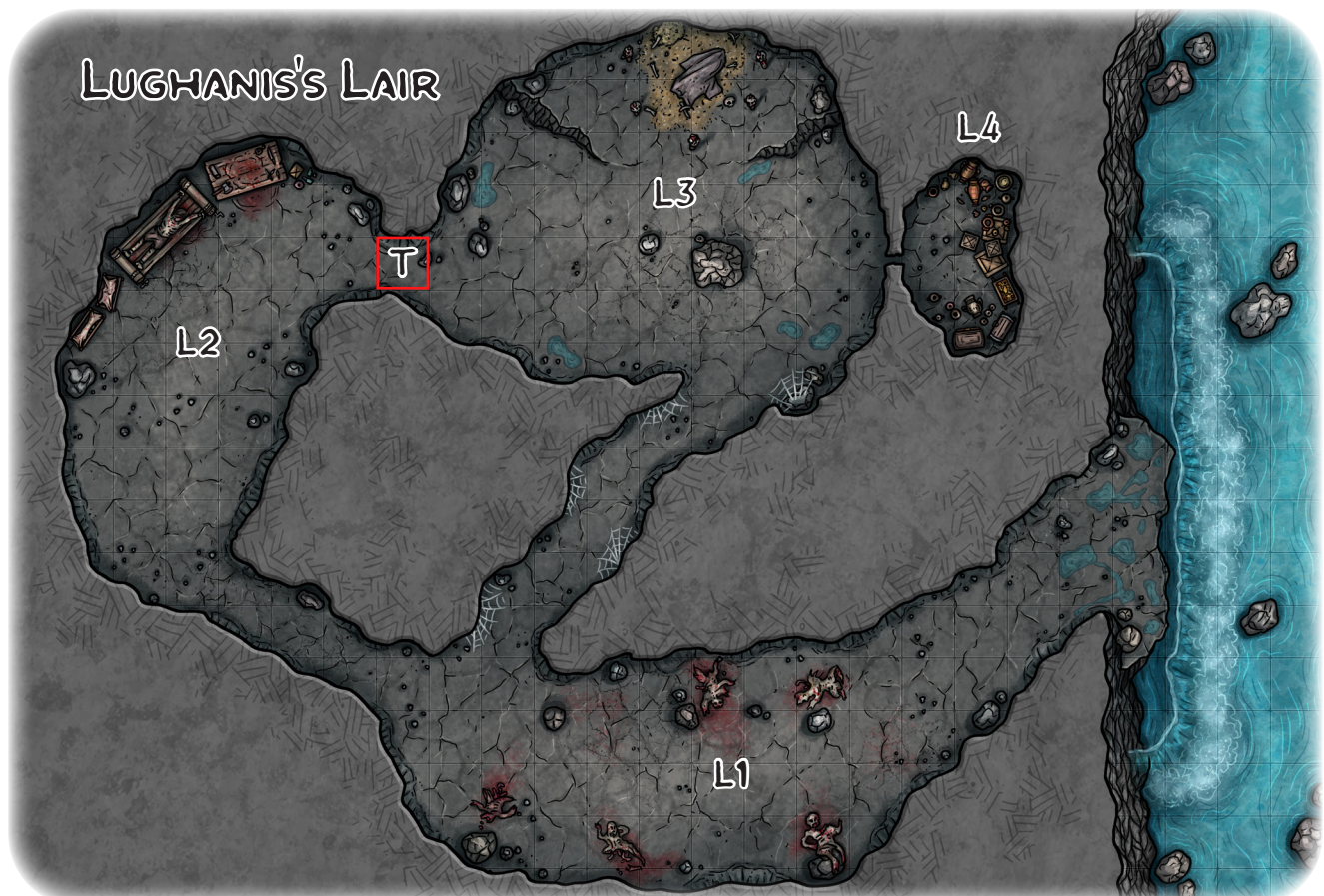
- **Descending the Rope.** Each character must make a successful DC 10 Strength (Athletics) check to descend the rope. This check is made with advantage or disadvantage depending on if the Wisdom (Perception or Survival) check succeeded or failed, respectively. Creatures with climbing speeds automatically succeed on the check.

If a creature fails the Strength (Athletics) check or the rope comes loose while that creature is descending, that creature must make a successful DC 15 Strength or Dexterity saving throw to grab onto something or fall 1000 feet to the water below, taking 10d6 bludgeoning damage. Checks to scale the wall without a rope are made with disadvantage.

LUGHANIS'S LAIR

Lughanis's lair has the following General Features:

- **Light.** The cave is completely dark save for the main entrance where light from beyond the waterfall illuminates the first 30 feet of the cavern with dim light.
- **Sounds.** The rushing sounds of the falls are ever-present within the cave. Creatures within the cave have disadvantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing.
- **Ceilings.** The ceilings of the caverns are 15 feet high and tunnels connecting them are 10 feet high.
- **Floors and walls.** The floors and lower walls of the cave are smooth rock carved by thousands of years of water eroding the surface. The upper walls and ceilings have been worked more recently to make this cave a more fitting lair for an oni.



L1. ENTRANCE

When the party reaches the cave, you can read the following:

The rocky floor of the cave is damp and the roar of rushing water behind you is nearly deafening. Further in, the tunnel leads around a bend, beyond which a faint light twinkles. Strewn around the tunnel are humanoid corpses, stripped of their bones. Their skin lies stretched and drooping on the floor as if meticulously skinned.

The corpses are actually five **boneless**, which serve as guards for Lughanis. Characters with a passive Perception of 14 or greater notice one of the corpses twitching slightly. When a creature moves within five feet of one of the boneless, they all animate and attack.

The faint light from beyond the bend is from a pair of **will-o'-wisps**, with one floating in the tunnel between areas L1 and L3 and one in L2. The will-o'-wisps use their light to attempt to lure any unwary adventurers deeper into Lughanis's lair. In the first round of combat, these creatures turn invisible and float towards the cave entrance to join the fight, bathing the area beyond the entrance in darkness.

During this encounter, Lughanis uses a crossbow from a distance, attempting to appear like he is helping, but keeping out of harm's way. During this time he observes the party, taking note of who the magic users are, who appears to be well armored, and who possesses magical items. He does not mind if his guards are destroyed. He expects to replenish the boneless with the bodies of the characters.

L2. TORTURE CHAMBER

When the party enters the cavern, you may read the following:

The claustrophobic tunnel opens up into a tall cavern. At the northern end of the room is a blood-spattered wooden table covered in various tools and implements that are similarly covered in viscera. Next to the table looms a large wooden rack, and along the western wall, swaths of what appears to be leather stretches across the damp rocky walls. As you approach, you can make out the darkened silhouette of a bedraggled figure laid across the rack. The smell of rot and decay assaults your nostrils.

The figure on the rack is a potentially helpful character for the party. Here are a few options, but feel free to adjust for your own needs:

- **Ezmerelda d'Avenir** who was hunting down Lughanis by herself, but was defeated. She does not recognize him in his shapeshifted form. She has no spell slots and her weapons and special equipment are missing (they are in L4. Treasure Room).
- **Mad Mary (commoner)** from Chapter 3: Village of Barovia who was searching for her daughter Gertruda and was captured by Lughanis.
- Some other NPC the party became friendly with in an earlier part of the adventure that would be fun or interesting to bring back, a replacement character for a player whose character died previously, or potentially someone the party thought was dead - because no one ever truly dies in Barovia.

Whichever NPC is strapped to the rack is unconscious when the party enters. If the party decides to heal and release them, they will assist them however they can within reason. A party member can bring the NPC to consciousness with 1 hit point with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check. A creature that uses a charge of a healer's kit succeeds on the check automatically.

A character that inspects the leather on the western wall and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check can determine that the hides stretched across the cavern wall are made out of human skin. A character that is proficient in the Medicine skill automatically succeeds the check.

Trap. There is a trip wire at the location marked 'T' on the map connected to a cage on the ceiling at the threshold of L3. Place this trap at whichever entrance to area L3 the party uses first, whether it's from area L1 or L2. The wire that triggers the trap can be spotted with a DC 18 Wisdom (Perception) check. A creature that triggers the trap must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or become trapped by an iron cage that drops from the ceiling. The cage has a locked door, which can be picked with a DC 20 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The cage bars can be forced open with a DC 25 Strength check or by creatures with a combined strength of 40 or more. The bars have an AC of 19, 32 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage, and vulnerability to acid damage. Once 2 bars are destroyed, a medium creature can escape the cage. Lughanis knows the location of the trip wire and steps over it if he goes first. If anyone else triggers the trap, Lughanis uses the opportunity to attack.

L3. LUGHANIS'S CAVE

When the party enters this section of the cave, you may read the following:

The oppressive gloomy cavern looms over you like a thick blanket. Periodically, water drips from the stalactites on the ceiling, echoing across the cavern walls over the low rumble of the falls outside. On the northern side of the room there is primitive bedding made of large tufts of straw. Strewn amongst the straw are small bones. Around the perimeter of the bedding, several wooden pikes have been driven into the rockbed. Atop each of them is a severed human head, their faces twisted in agony. On the eastern side of the cavern, a 1-foot wide crack disrupts the smooth wall.

The severed heads are Lughanis's grisly trophies from his previous victims. A character that inspects the bones and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Medicine) check can determine that these bones are, in fact, human. If the check succeeds by 5 or more, the character can determine that both child as well as adult bones are present.

Wall crack. A 1-foot wide crack in the western wall leads to Lughanis's treasure trove. He normally traverses it by shapeshifting into a small humanoid or using a *gaseous form* spell. A description of this area is presented below in L4. Treasure Room.

Trap. There is a trap at the threshold of L2. and L3. (see L2. Torture Chamber for details).

At an advantageous moment, such as the triggering of the trap or while characters are preoccupied investigating the crack that leads to L4. Treasure Room, Lughanis transforms into his oni form and attacks. When that happens, you can read the following:

Grygori begins to chuckle. Then his voice deepens as his laughter verges on maniacal. His skin shifts in hue and changes as he grows several feet in height. Now taking the form of a demonic looking blue-skinned ogre with a pair of short ivory horns protruding from his foreheads, 'Grygori' flashes a toothy grin as his dark eyes and white pupils lock onto you with ferocity. He raises his walking stick, which now takes the appearance of a rune-carved silver staff. "Lovely." He growls.

Tactics. Lughanis begins the fight by casting a *wall of force* spell to divide the party or casts *cone of cold* if the party is grouped up. He then engages in melee combat with the *staff of power*. If the party is able to reunite, he will not hesitate to use another *cone of cold* or *fireball* spell - though he favors melee combat so as not to "spoil the meat". If Lughanis finds himself overpowered, he may use a *wall of force* spell in a dome around himself and grin at the party as he regains hit points with his regeneration feature. He ends the spell once either he has fully healed or the party gains access to his treasure room.

Lair Actions. While inside his lair, Lughanis has access to the following lair actions. On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Lughanis takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; he can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Lughanis animates two **death's heads (gnashing heads)** from the pikes in his room. These creatures are friendly towards Lughanis and act on their own initiative rolls.
- Lughanis furiously stomps on the ground causing stalactites to drop from the ceiling in a 20-foot-radius cylinder centered on a point within 30 feet of him. Each creature in the area must make successful DC 15 Dexterity saving throws or take 3d6 piercing damage.
- A mist cloud forms in a 20-foot-radius sphere centered on a point Lughanis can see within 120 feet of him. The sphere spreads around corners, and its area is heavily obscured. The mist dissipates after one round. Lughanis can see clearly through the mist.

Disarming Lughanis. Clever characters may try to disarm Lughanis, by either wrenching the staff from his clutches or using a *heat metal* or *telekinesis* spell. The optional rule for disarming (Dungeon Master's Guide page 271) is as follows: A creature can use a weapon attack to knock a weapon or another item from a target's grasp. The attacker makes an attack roll contested by the target's Strength (Athletics) check or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. In order to make it more difficult to succeed than a single check, you can make it so that Lughanis must be first grappled, incapacitated, paralyzed, prone, restrained, or stunned before he can be disarmed.

Treasure. Lughanis carries the Mad Mage's *staff of power* and three keys to the chests in area L4. Treasure Room.

L4. TREASURE ROOM

When characters examine the crack in the wall, you can read the following:

The thin crack forms a tunnel to a room beyond where ornate chests are stacked.

The crack is too thin for a medium or larger creature to fit through without magical means. A small or tiny creature can squeeze through the crack. The crack can be widened through brute force (the wall has an AC of 17, 40 hit points, and immunity to psychic and poison damage), but doing so puts the structural integrity of the cave at risk. Each time the wall is struck (attack hit or miss), there is a 10% chance that the vibrations open a fissure that causes water to begin flooding into the cave.

Flood. If a fissure is formed the characters have 1 minute to escape the cave before it becomes flooded. You can play out that minute in initiative order, going turn by turn. At the start of each round, describe how the fissure begins to grow from a trickle to a torrent of water that eventually will threaten to wash the party out of the cave and over the falls. Alternatively, you may run this encounter as a series of skill checks or a skill challenge similar to those from 4E D&D. The following can be used to increase the pressure if the flood is triggered:

- Even if the party has Lughanis's three keys, it may take some trial and error to figure out which keys go to which chests. The first time a character attempts to open a chest there is only a 33% chance that it is the right key. To attempt to try another key, a character must use a full action rather than an object interaction to insert the second key and open a chest.
- Looting the chests takes time. A character can use an action to gather half of the contents in a chest into a bag or sack. The chests won't fit through the crack. If transported out of the room through magical means or through the broken down wall, a character carrying a chest has their speed reduced by half due to the chest's bulk.

Treasure. Lughanis's treasure trove consists of three chests and various crates. The chests are locked and can be opened with Lughanis's keys (see Flood above if characters are under pressure for time), or picked open with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools. The first chest contains 200 cp, 1,000 sp, 1,200 gp, and 20 pp, 10 jets worth 100 gp, and *goggles of the night* and a *wind fan*. The second chest contains 300 cp, 2,000 sp, 800 gp, 50 pp, and a diamond worth 300 gp. The third chest contains 200 cp, 8,000 sp, 100 gp, 30 pp, a black pearl worth 500 gp, two *bolts of undead slaying* and the Mad Mage's spellbook which contains all of the spells on his stat block plus *plane shift* and any additional spells of your choosing. (Gold totals are 700 cp, 11,000 sp, 2,100 gp, 100 pp). If Ezmerelda was the bound NPC in area L2. Torture Room, all of her special equipment is in the second chest.

CONCLUSION

If the party successfully returns the Mad Mage's spellbook he is overjoyed. As a reward, he allows the party to hold on to his staff of power until they are able to defeat Strahd. Through his years of despair, he has lost the will to participate in the fight himself, though will possibly use his *teleport* spell to bring the party to any of the towns in Barovia where they may continue their quest. The next day, the Mad Mage prepares the *plane shift* spell and attempts to use it to escape Barovia. Unfortunately, either Strahd or the Dark Powers cause the spell to fail and the Mad Mage is sent spiraling back into despair. At your discretion, if cured of his madness, you can run the Mad Mage's Mansion as suggested on page 40 of *Curse of Strahd*.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Caught in a Lie. If Lughanis's deception is discovered before the party ever enters the cave, Lughanis casts the *invisibility* spell on himself and verbally goads the party into his lair. Potentially claiming to have a magical staff they can plunder inside. Once the party enters the lair, you can have Lughanis stalk them from the shadows until an opportune time to strike, or have him attempt to repeat the deception by pretending to be the individual strapped to the rack in L2.

Killing the Mad Mage. If the party kills the Mad Mage, you can put mad scrawlings on papers about how everything is hopeless without his spellbook and staff. You can accompany these papers with a map of Barovia with a map of the area with Tser Falls circled and a note that says, "SPELLBOOK? STAFF?"

Reneging the Mad Mage. Once the party finds the staff of power and the spellbook, they may choose to keep these items for themselves. This is an acceptable scenario, and fits the morally gray tone of the rest of the adventure. At your discretion, the Mad Mage can seek revenge on the party at a later point if he discovers their betrayal.

Two Staves of Power. In *Curse of Strahd*, it is possible to obtain a *staff of power* in Castle Ravenloft K84. Catacombs, Crypt 15 by solving a riddle. If your party solves the riddle to make the staff appear and you would prefer not to have two *staves of power* in your game, you can either change Khazan's staff to be a different magical staff, such as a *staff of fire*, or if you're feeling particularly generous, you can have a character who brings the *staff of power* to Khazan's crypt and speaks his name have the *staff of power* turn into a *staff of the magi*.

MAGIC ITEMS

BOLTS OF UNDEAD SLAYING

Weapon, very rare

A bolt of slaying is a magic weapon meant to slay undead. If an undead creature takes damage from the bolt, the creature must make a DC 17 Constitution saving throw, taking an extra 6d10 piercing damage on a failed save, or half as much extra damage on a successful one. Once a bolt of slaying deals its extra damage to a creature, it becomes a nonmagical bolt.

GOGGLES OF THE NIGHT

Wondrous Item, uncommon

While wearing these dark lenses, you have darkvision out to a range of 60 feet. If you already have darkvision, wearing the goggles increases its range by 60 feet.

STAFF OF POWER

Staff, very rare (requires attunement by a Sorcerer, Warlock, or Wizard)

This staff can be wielded as a magic quarterstaff that grants a +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. While holding it, you gain a +2 bonus to Armor Class, saving throws, and spell attack rolls.

The staff has 20 charges for the following properties. The staff regains 2d8 + 4 expended charges daily at dawn. If you expend the last charge, roll a d20. On a 1, the staff retains its +2 bonus to attack and damage rolls but loses all other properties. On a 20, the staff regains 1d8 + 2 charges.

Power Strike. When you hit with a melee attack using the staff, you can expend 1 charge to deal an extra 1d6 force damage to the target.

Spells. While holding this staff, you can use an action to expend 1 or more of its charges to cast one of the following spells from it, using your spell save DC and spell attack bonus: cone of cold (5 charges), fireball (5th-level version, 5 charges), globe of invulnerability (6 charges), hold monster (5 charges), levitate (2 charges), lightning bolt (5th-level version, 5 charges), magic missile (1 charge), ray of enfeeblement (1 charge), or wall of force (5 charges).

Retributive Strike. You can use an action to break the staff over your knee or against a solid surface, performing a retributive strike. The staff is destroyed and releases its remaining magic in an explosion that expands to fill a 30-foot-radius sphere centered on it.

You have a 50 percent chance to instantly travel to a random plane of existence, avoiding the explosion. If you fail to avoid the effect, you take force damage equal to 16 × the number of charges in the staff. Every other creature in the area must make a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes an amount of damage based on how far away it is from the point of origin, as shown in the following table. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage.

Distance from Origin	Damage
10 ft. away or closer	8 x the number of charges in the staff
11 to 20 ft. away	6 x the number of charges in the staff
21 to 30 ft. away	4 x the number of charges in the staff

WIND FAN

Wondrous Item, uncommon

While holding this fan, you can use an action to cast the gust of wind spell (save DC 13) from it. Once used, the fan shouldn't be used again until the next dawn. Each time it is used again before then, it has a cumulative 20 percent chance of not working and tearing into useless, nonmagical tatters.

CREATURES

BONELESS

Medium undead

Armor Class 13
Hit Points 40 (9d8)
Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	15 (+2)	1 (-5)	10 (+0)	1 (-5)

Skills Stealth +4

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, poison

Condition Immunities charmed, exhaustion, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages understands the languages it knew in life but can't speak

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Compression. The boneless can move through any opening at least 1 inch wide without squeezing. It can also squeeze to fit into a space that a Tiny creature could fit in.

Unusual Nature. The boneless doesn't require sleep.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The boneless makes two Slam attacks. If both attacks hit a Large or smaller creature, the creature is grappled (escape DC 13), and the boneless can use Crushing Embrace.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

Crushing Embrace. The boneless wraps its body around a Large or smaller creature grappled by it. While the boneless is attached, the target is blinded and is unable to breathe. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw at the start of each of the boneless' turns or take 5 (1d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If something moves the target, the boneless moves with it. The boneless can detach itself by spending 5 feet of its movement. A creature, including the target, can use its action to try to detach the boneless and force it to move into the nearest unoccupied space, doing so with a successful DC 13 Strength check. When the boneless dies, it detaches from any creature it is attached to.

WILL-O'-WISP

Tiny undead, chaotic evil

Armor Class 19
Hit Points 22 (9d4)
Speed 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	28 (+9)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, necrotic, thunder;

bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Damage Immunities lightning, poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages The languages it knew in life

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Consume Life. As a bonus action, the will-o'-wisp can target one creature it can see within 5 feet of it that has 0 hit points and is still alive. The target must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw against this magic or die. If the target dies, the will-o'-wisp regains 10 (3d6) hit points.

Ephemeral. The will-o'-wisp can't wear or carry anything.

Incorporeal Movement. The will-o'-wisp can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

Variable Illumination. The will-o'-wisp sheds bright light in a 5- to 20-foot radius and dim light for an additional number of feet equal to the chosen radius. The will-o'-wisp can alter the radius as a bonus action.

ACTIONS

Shock. *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d8) lightning damage.

Invisibility. The will-o'-wisp and its light magically become invisible until it attacks or uses its Consume Life, or until its concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell).

DEATH'S HEAD (GNASHING HEAD)

Tiny undead

Armor Class 16 (natural armor)
Hit Points 17 (5d4 + 5)
Speed 0 ft., fly 30 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	13 (+1)	12 (+1)	5 (-3)	14 (+2)	3 (-4)

Damage Resistances necrotic

Damage Immunities lightning, poison

Senses passive Perception 12

Languages --

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Unusual Nature. The death's head doesn't require air, food, drink, or sleep.

ACTIONS

Gnashing Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6 + 1) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

EZMERELDA D'AVENIR

Medium humanoid, chaotic good

Armor Class 17 (+1 studded leather armor)

Hit Points 82 (11d8 + 33)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	19 (+4)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	11 (+0)	17 (+3)

Saving Throws Wis +3

Skills Acrobatics +7, Arcana +6, Deception +9, Insight +3, Medicine +3, Perception +6, Performance +6, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +7, Survival +6

Senses passive Perception 16

Languages Common, Elvish

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Spellcasting. Ezmerelda is a 7th-level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). Ezmerelda has the following wizard spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *fire bolt*, *light*, *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

1st level (0/4 slots): *protection from evil and good*, *magic missile*, *shield*

2nd level (0/3 slots): *darkvision*, *knock*, *mirror image*

3rd level (0/3 slots): *clairvoyance*, *lightning bolt*, *magic circle*

4th level (0/1 slot): *greater invisibility*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Ezmerelda makes two unarmed attacks.

Unarmed Strike. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 bludgeoning damage.

Curse (Recharges after a Long Rest). Ezmerelda targets one creature that she can see within 30 feet of her. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Wisdom saving throw or be cursed. While cursed, the target has vulnerability to one type of damage of Ezmerelda's choice. The curse lasts until ended with a greater restoration spell, a remove curse spell, or similar magic. When the curse ends, Ezmerelda takes 3d6 psychic damage.

Evil Eye (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest). Ezmerelda targets one creature that she can see within 10 feet of her and casts one of the following spells on the target (save DC 14), requiring neither somatic nor material components to do so: *animal friendship*, *charm person*, or *hold person*. If the target succeeds on the initial saving throw, Ezmerelda is blinded until the end of her next turn. Once a target succeeds on a saving throw against this effect, it is immune to the Evil Eye power of all Vistani for 24 hours.

Ezmerelda's Equipment. Ezmerelda normally has the following special equipment: *+1 rapier*, *+1 handaxe*, *silvered shortsword*, two *potions of greater healing*, six *vials of holy water*, and three *wooden stakes*. The stat block above assumes she is without her equipment other than her armor.

LUGHANIS

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (chain mail, staff of power)

Hit Points 110 (13d10 + 39)

Speed 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	11 (+0)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

Saving Throws Str +6, Dex +5, Con +8, Int +4, Wis +6, Cha +7

Skills Arcana +5, Deception +8, Perception +4

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Giant

Challenge 7 (2,900 XP)

Special Equipment. The oni wields a *staff of power*.

Innate Spellcasting. The oni's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15). The oni can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *darkness*, *invisibility*

1/day each: *charm person*, *cone of cold*, *gaseous form*, *sleep*

Magic Weapons. The oni's weapon attacks are magical.

Regeneration. The oni regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Spellcasting (Staff of Power). The staff has 20 charges. The oni can use an action to expend one or more charges to cast the following spells (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks): *cone of cold* (5 charges), *fireball* (5th-level version, 5 charges), *globe of invulnerability* (6 charges), *hold monster* (5 charges), *levitate* (2 charges), *lightning bolt* (5th-level version, 5 charges), *magic missile* (1 charge), *ray of enfeeblement* (1 charge), or *wall of force* (5 charges).

Power Strike. When the oni hits with a melee attack using the staff, it can expend 1 charge of the *staff of power* to deal an extra 1d6 force damage to the target.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The oni makes two attacks, either with its claws or its staff.

Claw (Oni Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) slashing damage.

Staff of Power. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (2d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage, or 11 (1d8 + 6) bludgeoning damage in Small or Medium form.

Light Crossbow. *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, range 80 ft./320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d8) piercing damage.

Change Shape. The oni magically polymorphs into a Small or Medium humanoid, into a Large giant, or back into its true form. Other than its size, its statistics are the same in each form. The only equipment that is transformed is its weapon, which shrinks so that it can be wielded in humanoid form. If the oni dies, it reverts to its true form, and its weapon reverts to its normal size.

DAN KAHN

ADVENTURE

leprekahn7@gmail.com



Rime of the Frostmaiden - Ythryn Towers of Magic Bundle

Rime of the Frostmaiden - Adventure Bundle 1

Rime of the Frostmaiden - Evermelt

Rime of the Frostmaiden - Revel's End Prison Break

Tomb of Annihilation - Complete DM's Bundle

Out of the Abyss - 'The Fall of Cyrog'

Candlekeep Mysteries Bookend - Curse on Beregost

